

# Distributed Participatory Design

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## INTRODUCTION

The number of potential stakeholder groups who may be involved during the design process is extensive. These groups may be external or internal to the organization in which the design group is located (Näslund, 1997). Enabling members of these groups to envisage or make sense of design proposals (whether those proposals originate with 'professional designers' or from the users themselves) is an essential element of all participatory approaches to design. Stakeholders can only make informed choices when the proposals being discussed are meaningful to them.

Participatory design (PD) is a design approach and philosophy that supports the direct participation of users and other stakeholders in system analysis and design work (Ehn; Grønbaeck, Grudin, Bødker & Bannon in: Shuler and Namioka, 1993). Participatory design aims to facilitate understanding between different stakeholder groups by giving each the opportunity to engage in hands-on activities. In this process, stakeholders exchange a large number of documents and models, and may spend a great deal of time meeting to resolve conflicts and specific design issues (Kensing, 2003: p. 31-37). This becomes challenging in design projects where stakeholders are fully distributed (both geographically and in regards of competence) (see e.g. Farshchian & Divitini, 1999).

Recent studies point to various ways in which the design process depends on communicative activities (Bellotti & Bly, 1996; Button and Sharrock, 1996; Wojahn et al., 1998). Activities such as communication and transformation involving design artifacts are key dimensions to the design process (Button and Sharrock, 1996).

Perry et al (1998) provide support of general conclusions proposed by an increasing number of researchers working in the area of computer supported cooperative work (CSCW), that providing affordable ways to communicate about collaboratively produced artifact such as mock ups, prototypes, is becoming an important area in CSCW, for example during design of distributed systems.

While providing affordable ways for different stakeholders (those who analyze the system and those who design it) to communicate around the artefact is discussed in the CSCW

literature, there is no explicit commitment to *direct user participation* in design.

Consequently, development of tools for distributed design teams may benefit from tools and techniques developed within the field of PD, which are developed from experience of participation by users and other stakeholders with differences in knowledge of technology and distributed in competence and roles. Hence, experiences gathered from PD may come in use during design of communication and design tools for distributed design teams (Kensing & Blomberg, 1998). Moreover, nowadays PD design teams most often are distributed, which stress a need for support and knowledge gathered from design of distributed systems. Given that these fields seem to merge, an interesting question is how may they best benefit from each other? Kensing & Blomberg highlighted this topic already in 1998, nevertheless, it seems to have lost attention since. We stress that whilst most design teams of today are distributed, further dialogue on this topic is of great importance.

## OBJECTIVES

This full-day workshop has the following objectives:

Generate possibilities for practitioners and researchers with interest in designing with users in distributed design, to discuss and learn strategies and methods from the fields of PD and distributed systems.

Enhance understanding of the differences and similarities between the fields CSCW and designing with users, and identify how Distributed Participatory Design (DPD) projects may benefit from the two.

Finally, identify existing tools and techniques and explore potential innovations, which could be applied in DPD projects.

The target audience of this workshop are researchers and practitioners who have an interest to overcome the challenges of performing participatory design in distributed design teams, or aim to expand the involvement of external stakeholders during design in distributed teams. Topics of particular interest will be:

- Should users be involved during design in distributed design teams?

- If so, how may their participation be supported?
- What challenges does their participation make towards the design team and the communication and/or design tools?

Further questions based on the position papers will of course also be of interest to discuss during the workshop.

## ATTENDANCE AND WORKSHOP FORMAT

Participants are accepted to the workshop through their position papers, which provides hands on experiences and/or raises issues of interest to discuss with other workshop attendances in relation to the workshop topic. The workshop organizers regard both empirical and theoretical research and hands-on experiences that contributes to the field of distributed participatory design, of interest.

All participants will present their paper during the workshop. Additionally, participants with an existing tool for distributed participatory design teams, may be allotted time for a demonstration during the workshop, if the tool is previously presented in their position paper, and the demonstration has been allowed by the workshop organizers. However, these demonstrations need to be both brief and presented through the facilities available at the workshop.

Discussion will be allot during the workshop and based upon the contribution through the position papers, which will be available to the participants before the workshop. All submissions will be reviewed with consideration to their quality, relevance and contribution to the workshop discussion.

All participants must submit their 2 to 4 pages position paper no later than July 27, 2006. Please submit your papers to [kdson@informatik.umu.se](mailto:kdson@informatik.umu.se), in WORD or PDF format. Notification of acceptance will be at August 10, 2006. The maximum number of participants to the workshop is 15. The workshop will be held on October 14.

### Workshop Facilities

Facilities available at the workshop are pen and paper, whiteboard, Internet connection and a projector with screen.

## THE WORKSHOP ORGANIZERS

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